

VIETNAM AFFAIRS STAFF
C/DCI

DATE: 26 Oct. 1971

TO: The Honorable David Packard

FROM:

SUBJECT:

REMARKS:

Attached is an informal memorandum on the impact of the floods in North Vietnam which I thought you might find of interest.

George A. Carver, Jr.
Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs

Attachment

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Rehabilitation of North Vietnam's Economy
Since the August Floods

General

1. North Vietnam has made very limited progress thus far in recovering from damage and disruption caused by the August floods. A significant part of the delay has been due to the fact that most areas flooded in August were still inundated in late September. Gradual recession of flood waters in October should permit a systematic recovery effort. This effort will focus on the transportation system and on agriculture.

Transportation

2. Hanoi's highest priority is devoted to clearing the country's main rail artery. On 29 September, photography shows that through traffic to Communist China on the Hanoi-Dong Dang line is still obstructed but shipments can be moved by way of the Thai Nguyen bypass. The last of several landslides on the Hanoi-Lao Cai line to the northwest are being cleared and through traffic can be resumed shortly. The southern rail line to Vinh has been opened by repairs to a bridge at Ninh Binh. Rail traffic from Hanoi to Haiphong was obstructed by water on 20 September and current status of this line is unknown. Photography shows breaks in the secondary road system too numerous to count. A continuing reconstruction effort will be required on these secondary arteries because they also are essential for orderly commerce.

Agriculture

3. In flooded agricultural areas the stress given earlier to replanting damaged rice has shifted to planting secondary crops on any available dry land. The normal deadline for planting 10th month rice is mid-August although Hanoi claims that it has been planted in the past as late as 21 September. It is now clear that hopes for replanting much of the 10th month rice have been dashed. Provinces not affected by the floods are being prodded to maximize yields with judicious cultivation and increased use of fertilizer and to protect the crop from insects and disease. Efforts are also being made to increase animal breeding stock to make up for losses in the floods.

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Repair of Dikes

4. Repair of the primary dikes is mandatory in order to contain the rivers and for the past month this task seems to have employed all available manpower, including military units. Repair of the secondary dike systems, on the other hand, can be stretched out until the spring of 1972 with most of the work employing peasant labor during slack agricultural periods. Probably the most critical water conservation problem confronting North Vietnam for the next few months will be clearing washed out or silted-in irrigation and drainage ditches and restoring flooded pumping stations, a great number of which appear to have been damaged. In their normal mode of operation, pumping stations remove water from fields during the wet season and provide the water essential for irrigation during the dry season. Manpower for part of the clean-up effort apparently will be obtained from schools, at the cost of academic achievement for the year. On 27 September, Nhan Dan printed a directive ordering students to help plant crops and participate in flood recovery work.

Industry

5. Most industrial production operations probably were resumed well before the end of September although some remain idle due to transportation bottlenecks. Press statements report that a few factories were still out of operation as late as mid-September, and photography of 20 September shows that the entire Viet Tri Chemical Complex and the Phu Tho Fertilizer Plant were idle, possibly due to cuts in the Hanoi-Lao Cai rail line. The amount of down-time suffered generally by industry cannot yet be measured with confidence, but the period seems likely to have lasted from 2 to 4 weeks.

Health

6. The Hanoi regime appears to have acted quickly and effectively to stem hazards to health and the outbreak of epidemics. Considerable attention has been given to informing the populace of dangers in drinking polluted water, eating spoiled foods, and the need to combat breeding of flies and

mosquitoes. Innoculations have been made available for cholera, typhoid, influenza, and polio; probably with the assistance of Communist China and the USSR. Both countries delivered medical supplies by air starting in late August. The British Consul in Hanoi reports that some flood victims are living on top of the dikes in squatter shacks and press reports indicate that similar makeshift housing accommodations exist elsewhere in the country. On balance, however, there seems to be no serious health threat to the nation.

I/NV
13 October 1971

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The Director

GACarver, Jr.

Secretary Laird's Travel Plans

Per our conversation, I called General Pursley after lunch. Secretary Laird's travel plans are as follows: On Sunday, 24 October, he leaves for Europe to attend the Nuclear Planning Group session, from which he will return to Washington on Friday, 29 October. The following Tuesday, 2 November, he leaves on a trip to Southeast Asia -- principally Vietnam -- from which he will return to Washington on Monday, 8 November.

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